

SIMMONS FRANKLIN

DRAWER 22

SCULPTORS-S  
(BUSTS)

Reservoir  
# 565

71.2009 085.03109




# Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Franklin Simmons

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
State of Indiana through the Indiana State Library

<http://archive.org/details/statuxxxxxxxslinc>

Rear 27 Parkview Avenue  
Meriden, Connecticut  
May 5, 1952

Lincoln National Life Foundation  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Sir:

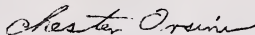
Your name has been given to me as a collector of material and antiques concerning Abraham Lincoln.

Enclosed please find a true copy of a letter, dated April 25, 1952, from Sigmund Rothschild. Also enclosed is a picture of a 14" bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln cast in 1865 by William Miller & Company, Metallists, Providence, Rhode Island, and sculptured by Franklin Simmons.

I have this bust up for sale and I am contacting you to find out if you would be interested in purchasing same. The bust is in excellent condition, as you can see from the enclosed photograph. An appointment for a personal inspection of this bust may be had by calling Meriden 5-5606 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., or Meriden 5-2711 after 5:00 p.m.

If you are interested in purchasing this piece of fine art, please contact me before May 28, 1952.

Sincerely yours,



Chester Orsini

CO/gah

Enclosure--2





PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROBERT J. MURRAY

186 PARKER AVENUE  
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT



# SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD

RESTORER

Circle 5-8270

ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN WEST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET • NEW YORK NINETEEN, N. Y.

4-5-52

TENTATIVE VALUE ON BRONZE  
BUST OF A. LINCOLN BY F. SIMMONS  
AT THIS TIME SHOULD BE  
TWENTY FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS AT  
A RETAIL LEVEL FOR PURPOSE  
OF PLACING AN INSURANCE BINDER  
AT A PROPER LEVEL OF VALUE. FINAL  
VALUE TO BE DETERMINED - RARELY  
BEING A DECIDING FACTOR

S. Rothschild



# SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD

RESTORER

Circle 5-8270

ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN WEST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET • NEW YORK NINETEEN, N. Y.

April 25, 1952.

Mr. Chester Orsini  
142 Carter Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut.

Dear Mr. Orsini:

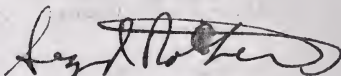
Your bronze head of Lincoln, which I have seen and studied with considerable interest, appears, in the light of my research, to be completely unique and original. The work of Franklin Simmons, it was done in either 1864 or 1865 and it was cast by William Miller & Co. in Providence in 1865. This was the only year that William Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

I was able to check numerous collectors of Lincoln material in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Providence for records of this work. In addition, libraries as the Simmons Memorial in Webster, Maine were checked. Donald C. Durman, author of "He Belongs to the Ages", listing all recognized statues of Lincoln, confirmed to me the existence of a circular medallion of Lincoln which was given to the Providence Public Library in 1904 by Mrs. John W. Daniel. It was cast in 1865 by William Miller & Co. and a design patent registered for it. (July 18, 1865, #D 2139, Class 29, Sub-class 23, Fine Arts Sculpt.)

Mentioned in Appleton's "Cyclopaedia of American Biography" is the fact that Simmons worked in Washington in 1864 and 1865. Some other busts that he made were those of William T. Sherman, David D. Porter, Ulysses S. Grant, and statues of Roger Williams, William King, Oliver P. Morton, and Henry W. Longfellow.

As an individual and unique work, its value would be limited only by the desire and means of an collector anxious to obtain it.

Very truly yours,



Sigmund Rothschild

SR:ni



SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD  
Restorer

Circle 5-8270

One Hundred Nineteen West Fifty-Seventh Street . New York Nineteen, N. Y.

April 25, 1952.

Mr. Chester Orsini  
142 Carter Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut.

Dear Mr. Orsini:

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As an individual and unique work, its value would be limited only by the desire and means of an collector anxious to obtain it.

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

Very truly yours,

S/Sigmund Rothschild

Sigmund Rothschild

Fine Art Restoration

Appraisals



2000

[illegible][illegible]

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the situation and the goals that need to be achieved.

1. The Commission has been informed that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines has been requested by the United States to provide information regarding the activities of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in the Philippines. The Commission has been requested to provide information regarding the activities of the CPUSA in the Philippines.

1. 1990年12月1日以前，在《民法通则》施行以前，即1986年4月1日以前，发生民事法律行为，适用行为发生时的法律。

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few have won distinction in art. Madame Nerida in music, Harry Brown and Philip Holmes in painting and Franklin Simmons in sculpture are about the only names that stand for fame in the different branches of art, while to offset them in literature is a great constellation of brilliant names which have given honor to American poetry, romance, history and letters.

One of the most eminent living sculptors is Franklin Simmons, a native of the little town of Webster over on the Androscoggin, but long a resident of No. 3, Via Venezia, Rome, Italy. He studied at Exeter but is not a graduate, although three of the colleges of Maine have recognized his genius by bestowing upon him the honorary degree of Bachelor of Arts.

# Bust of Abe As Junk May Be Worth Fortune

MERIDEN, Conn. (NNS) — A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought a year ago for \$2, may bring a fortune to junk dealer Chester Orsini.

The 14-inch bust has been recognized as the work of Franklin Simmons, noted American sculptor (1830-1913), who executed 15 public monuments, including statues of Gen. U. S. Grant, Roger Williams and Longfellow. The dealer recently turned down an

offer of \$100,000 for it, saying, "I don't have much money either, and I wouldn't want to be unhappy."

**FRANKLIN SIMMONS.**  
Famous American Sculptor, Native of Maine

## AGREEMENT SIGNED ON LINCOLN BUST

HARTFORD, Aug. 9 — (AP) A California barber and a Meriden junkman have joined forces to peddle a bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, once used as a doorstop and now described as a "valuable work of art."

Only Thursday the pair were at odds about the ownership of the 14-inch high bust and the barber had obtained a Superior court temporary injunction to prevent the junkman from selling it.

But Friday all was serene. The men have come to an agreement and are going to act as partners. They will ask Superior court Judge John H. King to dissolve the injunction he had issued earlier in the week.

They have retained David Jacobs of Meriden to represent them in "each and every matter which henceforth may arise in connection with the Lincoln bust."

Fifteen years ago John E. Cantarini, owner of a Meriden barber shop was given the Lincoln bust as a gift. When he moved to California last April, Chester Orsini, 23, a part time Meriden junk dealer, got the bust with other household furnishings. He took it to New York and had it appraised. The bust was identified as the work of Franklin Simmons, American sculptor who died in 1913. If it can be proven that the bust was executed from life, its value may reach as high as \$100,000.

Lengthened trip to a 1904 residence there, although in 1907 he returned to this country for a several months' trip, which included a visit to his birthplace in Maine. The city of Portland has now two splendid specimens of Simmons' work in the Soldiers and Longfellow monument.

The Williams statue was completed in Rome in 1870 and now stands in Statuary hall in the Capitol at Washington. Seven years later he completed another statue of Williams, which was unveiled at Providence.

One of his most important monumental works is that of the group on the Naval monument in Washington, in which History is personated standing ready to commit to marble the names of those whom the country desires to immortalize. Another is the equestrian monument of General Logan in Washington. It is estimated that 15 public monuments from his hands stand in various parts of this country.

D. A. JONAH  
Librarian

BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
PROVIDENCE 12, R. I.

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS RETURNED FOR YOUR GIFT OF

Three photographs of bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln cast in 1865 by William Miller & Company of Providence and sculptured by Franklin Simmons.

*David A. Jonah*  
Librarian

May 14, 1952

Simmons—which is far below the other work in point of merit and artistic conception and execution—includes his statues of Pendse, the Mother of Moses, Benjamin, and the Peat Fisherman, which last is in the reading room of the Portland public library.

Nine years ago Congress appropriated the sum of \$40,000 for an equestrian statue of Gen. John A. Logan, to which sum about \$12,000 was added by private contributions. Mr. Simmons was asked to submit a design for the monument, which he did, and his design was accepted. After nearly eight years of labor he has completed the work, and, according to eminent critics, he has modeled a finer equestrian statue than exists in this country today. This magnificent statue will be dedicated at Washington on Tuesday of this week, in the presence of President McKinley and his cabinet with officers and dignitaries of the army and navy and distinguished citizens. Gen. W. M. Lodge will open the proceedings at the statue with an address, after which Col. Rev. F. B. Bristol, pastor of the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church, will speak. Mr. Simmons himself will be present and make a short address and another George Tucker, son of Maj. Tucker, U. S. A., and grandson of Gen. Logan, will unveil the statue. Mr. McKinley will then make a short address, followed by the oration of the day by Hon. Champney M. Dyer, and a benediction by the Rev. J. C. Boyder. The band of the Black and white infantry will furnish the music for the program.

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u for writing us in this regard.

Yours very truly,

*Emile Kuri*

EMILE KURI, Director  
Set Decorating Department

ING ON THIS CORPORATION UNLESS IN WRITING AND SIG





# Bust of Abe Lincoln Bought for \$2,000 As Junk May Be Worth Fortune

MERIDEN, Conn. (NNS) — A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought a year ago for \$2, may bring a fortune to junk dealer Chester Orsini.

The 14-inch bust has been recognized as the work of Franklin Simmons, noted American sculptor (1839-1913), who executed 15 public monuments, including statues of Gen. U. S. Grant, Roger Williams and Longfellow. The dealer recently turned down an offer of \$15,000 for the piece.

Orsini said he bought the bust with other junk from a family who were moving out of their home "because I thought it would look nice on my television set."

A neighbor offered to buy it for \$100, and Orsini took the bust to Sigmund Rothschild, New York art expert, who identified it. If

proved it was done from Orsini's value is limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it," Rothschild said.

Orsini said he has received a letter from a niece of Simmons in Illinois, telling him she believes her uncle did the bust from life in Washington in 1865.

What about the people from whom he bought the bust? "Oh, I'm going to give them something," Orsini said. "They

don't have much money either, and I wouldn't want them to be unhappy."

## FRANKLIN SIMMONS.

Famous American Sculptor, Native of Maine, Dies in Rome.

Rome, Italy, Dec. 9.—Franklin Simmons, a well known American sculptor, died suddenly here, Monday.

Franklin Simmons, thrice decorated by the king of Italy, was regarded the world over as a famous American sculptor, although he lived in Rome for 45 years.

He was born in Webster, Me., Jan. 11, 1839, the son of Loring and Dorothea Batchelder Simmons. While a boy his parents removed to Bath and young Simmons grew up in that city and Lewiston. He attended Bates college, then the Maine state seminary.

When he was 13 years old he taught a writing school for a year and also worked in the mills. Leaving Bates before graduation, he moved to Portland, where he first devoted his time to painting. It was on a visit to Boston that he first became interested in sculpture and turned his attention to that form of art. His success was quite immediate. As it was war time, he removed to Washington, where he had splendid opportunity of making portrait busts of the leading commanders in the Union army, including Generals Grant, Meade, Sheridan, Thomas and Hooker, and Admirals Farragut and Porter. It is estimated that this work numbered about 100 portrait busts in marble.

In 1868, Mr. Simmons received a commission for a statue of Roger Williams. The conditions offered made it possible for him to realize the dream of every young sculptor, a visit to Rome. That visit was lengthened into a long residence there, although in 1907 he returned to this country for a several months' trip, which included a visit to his birthplace in Maine. The city of Portland has now two splendid specimens of Simmons' work in the Soldiers and Longfellow monument.

The Williams statue was completed in Rome in 1870 and now stands in Statuary hall in the Capitol at Washington. Seven years later he completed another statue of Williams, which was unveiled at Providence.

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TABLE ADDRESS

prints of for sale

and some and while prints of the bust edition

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we shall be happy to not we can consider it for our part we shall keep the two prints we have from you. If we find that our business purchase, your prints shall be very

for writing us in this regard.

Yours very truly,

*Emile Kuri*

EMILE KURI, Director  
Set Decorating Department

reputation in letters have won distinction in art, Madame Nordica in music, Harry Brown and Philip Holmes in painting and Franklin Simmons in sculpture are about the only names that stand for fame in the different branches of art, while to find them in literature is a great commendation of brilliant names which have given honor to American poetry, romance, history and letters.

One of the most eminent living sculptors is Franklin Simmons, a native of the little town of Webster over on the Androscoggin, but long a resident of No. 5 Via Ventii Settembre, Rome, Italy. He studied at Bates, but is not a graduate, although three of the colleges of Maine are recognized his genius for bestowing upon him honorary degrees; while he was knighted by the king of Italy in 1893. He began his work of modeling in Lewiston, removing, after some years of serious work in Maine, to Washington, and finally going to Rome which has been his residence for the past 33 years. Mr. Simmons is now 62 years of age.

The work of Mr. Simmons consists of 60 portrait busts in marble and 15 public monuments. The former embrace statues of Admirals Farragut and Porter, and those of Gen. Grant, Meade, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Hooker and others. His public monuments include statues of William King, Maine's first governor, and Roger Williams in the national capital at Washington; the grand army monument of Gen. Grant for the national capital, monument to Oliver P. Morton in Indianapolis, soldiers' monument and Longfellow statue in Longfellow square, Portland, and the significant, equestrian monument to Gen. Logan which is to be unveiled and dedicated in Iowa Circle, Washington, on Tuesday. The idealistic work of Mr. Simmons—which is far below his other work in point of merit and artistic conception and execution—includes his statues of: Penelope, the Mother of Moses, Benjamin, and the Pearl Fisherman, which last is in the reading room of the Portland public library.

Nine years ago Congress appropriated the sum of \$50,000 for an equestrian statue of Gen. John A. Logan, to which sum about \$12,000 was added by private contributions. Mr. Simmons was asked to submit a design for the monument, which he did, and his design was accepted. After nearly eight years of labor he has completed the work, and, according to eminent critics, he has modeled a more equestrian statue than exists in this country today. This magnificent statue will be dedicated at Washington on Tuesday of this week, in the presence of President McKinley and his cabinet with officers and detachments of the army and navy and distinguished citizens. Gen. W. M. Dodge will open the proceedings at the statue with an address, after which the Rev. F. H. Bristol, pastor of the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church, will speak. Mr. Simmons himself will be present and make a short address, and Master George Tucker, son of Maj. Tucker, T. S. A., and grandson of Gen. Logan, will unveil the statue. Mr. McKinley will then make a short address, followed by the oration of the day by Hon. Chauncey M. Depew and a benediction by the Rev. J. G. Butler. The end of the Brevette infantry will furnish the musical part of the program.

INDING ON THIS CORPORATION UNLESS IN WRITING AND SIGNED





John Hay Library

1

I could but feel interested  
in this statue for which  
I am so well supplied with  
material. But instead  
of having had an opportunity  
to make a statue of Lincoln  
which I was so well qualified  
to do I have been asked  
to make statues of men whom  
I have never seen like  
Gov. Morton of Ind. and  
others and although they  
have given satisfaction  
the task was not so con-  
genial as it would be in  
this case.

Hoping to hear from you  
I am Sincerely yours,

Franklin Simmons

c/o Sebastia + Reali  
20 Piazza di Spagna  
Rome.





Sculptor

Franklin Simmons (1864 or 65)

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROBERT J. MURRAY

186 PARKER AVENUE  
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT

# CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NORTH AVENUE AT CLARK STREET • CHICAGO 14 ILLINOIS

MICHIGAN 2-4600

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Mr. Chester Orsine  
142 Carter Avenue - Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsine:

The Society wishes to extend its sincere thanks to you for the three photographs of Abraham Lincoln by Franklin Simons. They will be a valuable addition to our Lincoln file of pictures.

With kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,

H. Maxson Holloway  
Curator





# UNCOVER RARE LINCOLN BUST BOUGHT AS JUNK

## Owner Tells of Offer of \$15,000

An unknown bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, found in an old house in Meriden, Conn., could bring a sizeable sum to the young junkman who owns it and be an important, if perhaps controversial, addition to Lincolniana.

The bust, temporarily kept in a vault in the First National Bank of Chicago, was brought here by Chester Orsine, 29 year old Meriden junk dealer and war veteran, on advice of an attorney who counseled bringing it "to the heart of the Lincoln" country to sell it.

Orsine acquired the bust, about 14 inches high, a year ago when he was called to buy "a pile of junk" in an old Meriden home whose owners were moving. He liked the work, so he took it home and put it atop his television set. Some friends also liked it, for several wanted to buy it.

### Took It To Appraiser

Frequently, says Orsine, he would remark to his wife, "That bust is worth a lot of money." His wife advised him to quit day dreaming. When one friend offered \$100 for it, Orsine said he decided to take it to New York and find out if it was valuable.

In New York, Sigmund Rothschild, an art dealer and restorer, declared the work to be "completely unique and original." Rothschild declared its value limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it.

The bust carries the name of William Miller and Company, Metallists, of Providence, R. I., and lists F. Simmons as the sculptor. Franklin Simmons was a well known sculptor born in 1839 in Webster, Me., who died in 1913. Rothschild told him that Simmons worked in Washington during 1864 and 1865, and executed several busts and statues while there. Rothschild said the bust was cast in 1865, since that was the only year that Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

Orsine, who says he has received one offer of \$15,000 for the bust, has showed it to several universities. They all would like to have

it but can't meet any such offer, said Orsine.

### Factor In It's Value

That is the case with the Chicago Historical museum, where the curator, H. Maxson Holloway, said the bust was "very nice and we'd like to have it as a gift, but we're not in a position to offer any such money for it."

A factor that may have a considerable bearing on the value of the bust is whether it was executed from life, with Lincoln sitting for the sculptor. As far as is known, said Holloway, the only life bust of Lincoln was executed in 1860 by Leonard Volk of Chicago. Lincoln then was beardless. He didn't start growing whiskers until he won the Republican nomination for President.

Ralph Newman, another Chicago expert on Lincolniana, pronounced the bust "darn nice and very interesting." He said, however, that Simmons probably did not execute it from life, and that many such busts had been made from photographs."

### Called Interesting

"I don't think it adds anything historically or artistically to the

## Lincoln Bust Found

(Story in adjoining column)



[TRIBUNE Photo]

Bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln which was found in Meriden, Conn.

Lincoln story, tho it is an interesting piece," said Newman.

The bust was placed in a bank vault on the advice of Floyd F. Shields, attorney at 111 W. Washington st., to whom Orsine was referred by a friend in Meriden. If the bust is sold, Orsine plans to expand his junk business and buy some real estate.

CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE  
Monday, July 21, 1952  
Part 1—Page 18 H

\$100,000 Junk?

## **Bust of Lincoln**

### **Sold for \$25**

MERIDEN, Conn., Aug. 2 (UP).  
**A** BRONZE bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought by a junk dealer for \$25, was being studied by art experts today in the belief it may be worth as much as \$100,000.

Chester Orsini paid \$25 for the 14-inch bust "because I thought it would look nice on my television set."

Antique dealers soon began calling on Orsini. Bids for the bust climbed as high as \$15,000, he said.

The 29-year-old junk dealer asked Sigmund Rothschild, the art collector, to help identify the bust. It was decided that it had been done in 1864 or 1865 by Franklin Simmons of Webster, Me.

. . . .

**I**F THE bust was done from life, it may be worth as much as \$100,000, Orsini quoted Rothschild as saying. There is only one bust of Lincoln done from life in existence.

Simmons was known to have been working in Washington at the time the bust was cast, Orsini said.

He said art dealers and Lincoln experts from coast to coast had contacted him about the bust. But Orsini said he isn't in the selling mood—yet.

# Rare Bust Of Lincoln Found Here May Be Worth \$15,000

**Chester Orsini  
Says Bought It  
In Junk Saie**

A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, found in the cellar of a house here by a local youth buying junk, has art experts in the mid-West excited and may bring \$15,000 or more to the local man.

The Meriden man is Chester Orsini, 29, of 142 Carter Avenue



Lincoln Bust

extension, and he found the bust over a year ago in the cellar of a home here.

He first dumped it in his load but later liked the looks of it and took it home. After polishing it up he placed it on his television set.

He told his wife he thought it "worth a lot of money" but the matter was forgotten until a visitor, seeing it, offered \$25 for it. Later the man returned and raised the offer to \$100 and Orsini thought he had something.

He consulted a local lawyer and was advised to see Sigmund Rothschild, famous New York art dealer. Rothschild said it was an original and thought it might be worth as much as \$25,000 but advised trying to sell it in "heart of the Lincoln country."

The bust carries the name of William Miller and Company, metallist of Providence, R. I., -and

must have been cast in 1865, according to the art expert, who said that this was the only year that Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

On the back of the bust the name of the sculpter is listed as F. Simmons. Webster's Biographical Dictionary lists Franklin Simmons as born in Webster, Maine, in 1839, dying in 1913. He had studios in Maine and among his works are equestrian status and busts of Grant, Sherman, etc.

Simmons worked in Washington in 1864 and 1865 and executed several busts and statues while there. Mr. Rothschild said the value of the bust was only limited by the desire and means of a collector who wanted it.

Orsini went to Chicago with the bust and said he had an offer from one college of \$15,000 if subscriptions can be secured to raise the money. Other colleges were interested.

At the Chicago Historical Museum the curator, H. Maxson Holloway, said that he wanted the bust as a gift but that the museum was not in a position to offer \$15,000 for it.

The New York art dealer thought the bust was done from life in Washington but some mid-west experts thought it might have been from a photograph, which would reduce its value.

Through a Meriden lawyer, Orsini got in touch with Floyd F. Shields, Chicago attorney, who is handling the sale and said it might take some time. The bust has been placed in a bank vault in Chicago under care of Mr. Shields.

The Chicago Tribune on July 21 carried a full account of the Meriden man's find under the heading "Uncover Rare Lincoln Bust" and also published a photograph of the bust.





# Buys Bust of Lincoln For \$2; May Get 100G

Meriden, Conn., Aug. 3 (U.P.)—A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought by a junk dealer for \$2, was being studied by art experts today in the belief it may be worth as much as \$100,000.

Chester Orsini paid \$2 for the 14-inch bust "because I thought it would look nice on my television set."

Antique dealers soon began calling on Orsini and bids for the bust climbed as high as \$15,000, he said.

The 29-year-old junk dealer asked Sigmund Rothschild, the art collector, to help identify the bust. It was decided that it had been done in 1864 or 1865 by Franklin Simmons of Webster, Maine.

## Only One Known.

If the bust was done from life, it may be worth as much as \$100,000, Orsini quoted Rothschild as saying. There is only one other bust of Lincoln done from life in existence.

Simmons was known to have been working in Washington at the time the bust was cast, Orsini said.

## Junked Lincoln Bust Valued at \$100,000

MERIDEN, Conn., Aug. 9—(UP)—A California barber and a Meriden junk dealer teamed up today to find how much they can get for a "worthless" bust of Abraham Lincoln which art experts believe may be worth \$100,000.

Barber John E. Cantanari obtained the 14-inch bust, which weighs 22 pounds, in 1937. It was used as a doorstop. Last April the Cantanari family sold their household furnishings to junk dealer Chester Orsini, 29, when they moved to California.

Orsini liked the bronze bust because "it would look good on my television set." He paid about \$25 for it.

Cantanari claimed the junk dealer came in possession of the bust by mistake.

Antique dealers heard about the bust. They made offers that reached as high as \$15,000 but Orsini, sensing he had something big, refused to sell.

Orsini conferred with New York art expert Sigmund Rothschild who said the bust apparently was done from real life by Franklin Simmons around 1865.

"Its value would be limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it," Rothschild said. He added Orsini may be able to get as much as \$100,000 for it.

The junk dealer sent the bust to the Chicago Historical Society for further examination.

Meantime, Orsini received a letter from a niece of Simmons which said she believed her uncle did the bust in Washington in 1865.

Cantanari read newspaper accounts of the bust and immediately obtained an injunction restraining the junk dealer from selling the piece. They now have agreed to act as partners and Cantanari plans to ask the judge to withdraw the injunction.

## Lincoln Bust in Junk May Be Worth Fortune

Meriden, Conn., Aug. 4—(AP)—A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, picked up by a junk dealer in a cluttered cellar, now may be worth a modest fortune to him.

Chester Orsini, 29-year-old veteran of World War II, found the tarnished bust a year ago, polished it up and put it on his television set. Several offers to buy it prompted Orsini to look into its value.

Sigmund Rothschild, New York art dealer and appraiser, said the bust was an original by Franklin Simmons and would be worth as much as \$25,000 "in the heart of the Lincoln country" in the mid-west. Art records show that Simmons worked in Washington, D. C., in 1864 and 1865 where he did several busts and statues.

AUG 3 - 1952

London Sunday Times  
October 24th 1964

Continued  
from page 1

Continued  
from page 1

## Lincoln Bust Costing \$2 May Yield A Fortune

*Special to The SUN-TIMES*  
MERIDEN, Conn. — A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought for \$2, may bring a fortune to Chester Orsini, 29-year-old junk dealer.

The 14-inch bust has been recognized as the work of Franklin Simmons, noted American sculptor (1839-1913), who executed 15 public monuments, including statues of U.S. Grant, Roger Williams and Henry Wardsworth Longfellow. The lucky dealer recently turned down an offer of \$15,000 for the piece.

Orsini said he bought the bust from people who were moving out

of a house "because I thought it would look nice on my television set." Later he took it to Sigmund Rothschild, New York art expert and restorer, who identified it as a Simmons piece.

In a letter to Orsini, the expert described it as "a work of art," and if it can be proved that it was done from life "its value is limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it."

Orsini is holding on to the bust until it is established whether it was executed from life. He has an attorney collecting data on the subject. He has already received a letter from a niece of Simmons in Illinois, he said, telling him that she believes her uncle did the bust from life in Washington in 1865.

Asked what he intended to do with his expected bonanza, Orsini said that he planned "really to set myself up in the junk business."





# Orsini Agrees To Share Lincoln Bust Proceeds With Former Local Barber

A former Meriden barber, now a resident of Rivera, Calif., and a local junkman last night joined forces to sell a bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, believed to be valued up to \$100,000.

In a joint statement issued last night, John A. Cantarini, who until last April conducted a barber-shop at 500 West Main Street, and Chester C. Orsini, of 142 Carter Avenue Extension, designated Attorney David H. Jacobs, of this city, as their official representative and spokesman in the sale of the bust, which is rising in value ever since it was discovered to be the probable original work of Franklin Simmons, who died in 1913.

Orsini acquired the bust last April when Cantarini and his wife left the city to live in Rivera. He claimed it was considered valueless and acquired it for very little money along with other discarded items.

## Injunction Sought

But Cantarini, who flew across the country and arrived in Meriden Wednesday, immediately moved to have Orsini enjoined from selling the bust.

He retained Mr. Jacobs and Thursday afternoon Judge John H. King signed a temporary injunction restraining Orsini from disposing of the work of art. Service was made on Orsini by Deputy County Sheriff Abe Hurwitz, but the official papers were not filed in the clerk's office in the New Haven Superior Court.

Orsini conferred with Cantarini yesterday and by evening all was serene. Mr. Jacobs announced that the temporary injunction would be officially withdrawn today since the two "had reached an agreement" and "no dispute exists between them."

Cantarini claimed that he owned the bust for 15 years, that it was given to him by a friend. He described it as 12 inches high, eight inches wide and weighed 20 pounds. He claimed there "is no known duplicate" of the likeness of the Great Emancipator.

He said when he moved to Rivera, he thought his wife packed it, and his wife believed he packed the object. However, upon arrival at their new home on the west coast, the bust was not to be found.

## Believed Lost

He telephoned local friends and



Bust Found Here

relatives, but none knew of its whereabouts, and the bust was given up for lost until he read in the newspapers that Orsini had had it appraised and that it was found to be of great value.

Orsini said, when the news of the value of the bust was published about a week ago, that he acquired it for a few dollars in buying discarded junk, and that it was the weight which intrigued him. He polished the bronze piece and put it in his living room.

The anxiety of an antique dealer to purchase it gave him the idea that it might have value, he said. He was offered \$25 for the bust, and when he declined to sell, the dealer increased the offer substantially.

## Had It Appraised

He went to Sigmund Rothschild, New York art dealer, to have the bust examined and it was the New

(Continued on Page 3)

Yorker who said that if the work was done from life and not copied from a photograph, then the work of art is priceless. He said there was no known market value, that it would bring whatever a dealer, collector or museum wanted to offer for it.

The story of the find was given widespread publicity, spreading out so that Cantarini discovered the whereabouts of the bust he originally owned.

The official statement issued last night follows:

"It was announced by John E. Cantarini, formerly of Meriden, and now of Rivera, California, and Chester C. Orsini, of this city, that David H. Jacobs, local lawyer, has been retained by them with respect to each and every matter which may henceforth arise in connection with the 'Lincoln Bust' the details of which recently appeared in the public press. It has also been announced that an agreement has been reached between them and that no dispute exists between them. Henceforth, all public statement concerning the 'Lincoln Bust' will be made directly by Mr. Jacobs, our legal representative, who is the only one authorized to speak or act in our behalf."





THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT  
MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION

February 10, 1953

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to read the two letters which Emily J. (Libbey) Simmons (Mrs. Franklin Simmons) wrote from Washington to her cousin, Mrs. S. C. Libbey, of Saco, Maine, on April 7, and May 8, 1865. As eye-witness accounts of events connected with the closing days of the Civil War these are moving documents.

Upon referring to the files, I find that the letters are not unknown to us. Nearly a year ago, the Assistant Chief of our Exchange and Gift Division, informed the previous owner of the letters, Miss Ethel E. Johnson, of Belchertown, Massachusetts, that the Library "would be delighted to have them as gifts for the Library's manuscript collections." I am happy to give you the same assurance.

With best wishes,

Faithfully yours,

David C. Mearns  
Chief  
Manuscripts Division

Mr. Chester C. Orsini  
142 Carter Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut





## THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

August 6, 1953

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT  
MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Upon my return from a brief vacation I was disappointed to learn that I had missed a visit from you. I would like to have had that opportunity to be brought up-to-date on your researches.

I have, however, had an opportunity to examine the Simmons' bust. It is, as you know so well, a very pleasing likeness. One day, perhaps, it should adorn a gallery or museum; but after consulting Mr. Stern we are agreed that it is distinctly inappropriate to a library where the collections are properly and necessarily predominantly composed of books and manuscripts rather than original works of art. I trust that you will soon succeed in finding a suitable repository for this interesting object.

Meanwhile what are your wishes? Will you call for it in person, or shall we ship it to you by express?

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David C. Mearns".

David C. Mearns  
Chief  
Manuscripts Division

Mr. Chester Orsini  
Meriden  
Connecticut





# CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NORTH AVENUE AT CLARK STREET • CHICAGO 14, ILLINOIS

MICHIGAN 2-4600

Paul M. Angle *Secretary and Director*



October 9, 1953

Mr. Chester Orsine  
142 Carter Avenue, Ext.  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsine:

Your price for the Lincoln bust by Franklin Simmons is far beyond our own resources and I am sorry to say I do not know anyone who would be interested in contributing this sum for this purpose. I realize that the bust is a desirable piece, but it is one that we shall have to do without.

Sincerely yours,

*Paul M. Angle*

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# WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

2400 WEST ALAMEDA AVE. • BURBANK, CALIFORNIA • CABLE ADDRESS: DISNEY

March 18, 1958

Mr. Chester Orsini  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Thank you for your letter and the two prints of the Simmons bust of Lincoln, which you offer for sale.

We are planning an addition to Disneyland sometime in the future that has a historical theme and which will include memorabilia of all of the Presidents of the United States and it is possible that the bust of Lincoln would make a very worthwhile addition to this display.

If you will be kind enough to let us know what value you place upon this item, we shall be happy to inform you whether or not we can consider it for our purposes. In the meantime, we shall keep the two prints until we hear further from you. If we find that our budget does not allow this purchase, your prints shall be returned to you immediately.

Again thank you for writing us in this regard.

Yours very truly,

EMILE KURI, Director  
Set Decorating Department

EK:tsj



BROWN UNIVERSITY  
THE LIBRARY  
PROVIDENCE 12, RHODE ISLAND

John Hay Library

May 9, 1958

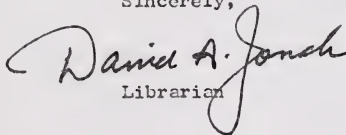
Mr. Chester Orsine  
Rear 27 Parkview Avenue  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsine:

We recently purchased at auction a collection of letters concerning the Lincoln Monument which was erected in Lincoln, Nebraska. In the collection were two letters by Franklin Simmons to the Honorable Addison Wait.

I have photoprints made of these two letters which I am enclosing to you. I think that you may find these of interest in connection with your head of Lincoln which was sculptured by Simmons. In exchange for these photostats perhaps you will be willing to let me have photostats of your letters.

Sincerely,

  
Librarian



Rome Aug 4 1908

Hon. A. Wail-

Sec Abraham Lincoln  
Monument Association

Dear Sir.

I have seen it stated that  
you are the Sec. of an Association  
formed for the purpose of erecting  
a statue of Pres. Lincoln

This project interests me for  
several reasons which I will  
explain

1st. I knew President Lincoln  
and so far as I know am the  
only American sculptor who  
remembers him

I spent the winter of 1864 & '65  
in Washington and met the  
Pres. a number of times and  
heard him from the balcony  
of the White House at the close  
of the War, when he addressed

FAVOR THE EASTERN  
BUY U.S. BONDS &  
PAYROLL SAVING





HOWARD ROTHSCHILD  
Hon. Addison Wail-  
Sec. Lincoln Mem. Association  
Lincoln Nebr.

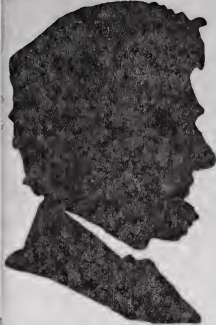
Dear Sir:- I was pleased to  
receive your letter of Aug 13  
and to know that my  
letter was acceptable.

It was interesting to me to  
hear that we both met  
Pres. Lincoln at about the  
same time. Those were  
great days in the history  
of our country which we  
will never forget.

I don't know if you were  
in Washington at the

THE FAST WAY  
U.S. BONDS ON  
ROLL SAVINGS





July 18, 1973

Mr. Chester Orsini  
Pine Maple Arms, Inc.  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Conn. 06450

Dear Mr. Orsini:

We were pleased to receive your complimentary letter of June 28th, together with the beautiful picture of the Franklin Simmon's sculptured bust of Abraham Lincoln.

I am having it mounted in a suitable frame which will adorn my office, since the Lincoln Club does not have a headquarters.

Whoever succeeds me as president will be presented the picture for his office and so will be passed on to future Lincoln Club Presidents.

Your thoughtfulness and generosity was appreciated by our board of directors which have had their regular monthly meeting last Saturday.

With kindest personal regards, I am.

Cordially yours,

J. S. Fluor  
President

JSF:bp  
cc: A. O. Beckman  
Robert Beaver

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Address: Post Office Box 3113, Fullerton, California 92634





# PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART

111 HIGH STREET PORTLAND, MAINE 04101 TELEPHONE 207 775-6148

28 September 1977

Dear Mr. Orsini,

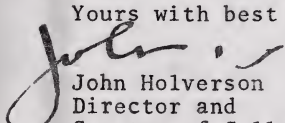
Thank you for your letter of 21 September with the enclosed original manuscript letter from Mrs. Franklin B. Simmons (Ella) to her cousin Sarah, from Venice, dated 10 July 1871. It is good to hear from you again and to have such a delightful addition to our growing collection of Simmons material. Thank you very much for your thoughtfulness. When the letter is catalogued, we will be sending a formal deed of gift.

In the meantime, you will be interested to learn that we have acquired a larger than life marble bust by Simmons, modelled from life, as well as a plaster bust of Grant by Simmons, dated 1866. With our full size figure, we are about complete when it comes to General Grant.

I look forward to hearing about the other Simmons letters you are pursuing. As you may know, your letter relates wonderfully to an old photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Simmons in a gondola in the Bacino di San Marco, which came from other descendants.

Thank you again for your gift.

Yours with best wishes,



John Holverson  
Director and  
Curator of Collections

Mr. Chester Orsini  
Pine Maple Arms, Inc.  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

JH:jm



This 48-page biography of sculptor Franklin Simmons is available in the Lincoln Library at the Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne Indiana.

FRANKLIN SIMMONS

for the  
Portland Museum of Art

Pamela W. Hawkes

December 1975





# Pine Maple Arms, Inc.

79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

ALSO SEE OVERSIZE PRINT  
FOR LARGE COLOR PICTURE

December 2, 1978

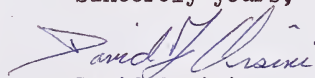
Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find a portrait of a bust of Abraham Lincoln and a brochure on the Franklin Simmons bust of Lincoln. In this brochure you will find literature describing the bust briefly and two letters of documents dating back to 1865, which I have in my possession at this time.

For any further information concerning the Bust of Lincoln, please contact me at my place of business:

2nd Level Restaurant  
975 Broad Street  
Meriden, Connecticut 06450  
Telephone - 203-238-4481

Sincerely yours,

  
David Orsini

DO:va  
Enclosure





*"completely unique and original"*

... Sigmund Rothschild

New York Art Dealer and Restorer

*"...an excellent piece of work... We have here at Lincoln University what is likely the third largest collection of Lincolniana in the entire country... we have many fine pieces of statue work... however, I do not believe that we have any that equal in excellence this fine work by Simmons."*

... R. Gerald McMurtry, Director of  
Lincolniana

Lincoln Memorial University

*"historic work of art"*

... Conrad L. Wirth, Director  
National Park Service,  
U.S. Dept. of Interior

*"it should adorn a gallery or museum"*

... David C. Mearns  
The Library of Congress

TEXT BY  
KENNETH BARNARD

PRINTED BY  
THE TIMES PRESS  
WAKEFIELD, RHODE ISLAND

# The FRANKLIN SIMMONS Bust of Lincoln



**1865**

Authenticated

The Only One of Its Kind In Existence

## FRANKLIN SIMMONS BUST OF LINCOLN

The dramatic discovery in 1952 of the Franklin Simmons bust of Lincoln was attended by publicity throughout the world. While purchasing household possessions in a Meriden, Connecticut residence, Mr. Chester Orsini noticed the bust, which was being used as a door-stop and children's plaything.

Thinking that it could be cleaned and then placed atop his television set, Mr. Orsini purchased it for two dollars. Aware of the bust's beauty after it had been refurbished, Mr. Orsini often commented to his wife that he wouldn't be surprised to learn that the object had considerable value.

When a friend offered him a hundred dollars for his likeness of Lincoln, its owner determined to ascertain the true worth of the bust. Then began an intensive, costly program of research which at one point even required Mr. Orsini to sell his car in order to finance the investigation.

Art dealers and Lincoln scholars confirmed the fact that he possessed a rare art object, a bust of the sixteenth President executed in 1865 by a famous American sculptor.

An entrancing piece of sculpture radiating grace and strength, it stands fourteen inches high and weighs approximately twenty-two pounds. Cast in gilded bronze, it bears on the back this inscription:

W. M. MILLER & CO. METALLISTS  
PROVIDENCE, R. I.  
F. SIMMONS SCULPT.

The year 1865, incidentally, is the only year that Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

Franklin Simmons (1839-1913) was born in Webster, Maine, an eighth generation descendant of John and Priscilla Alden. At various times he resided in Lewiston, Portland, Providence, Washington, and Rome, living for forty-five years in the Italian capital and dying there.

Building', and adds, "He is at present modelling a bust of Pres Lincoln—has modelled two medallions of him since his death."

She refers to the Thursday-night celebration of Lee's surrender and notes, "Mr. S. was at the White House that morning and had an interview with Lincoln and made arrangements for him to sit the following week, but, Alas—that following week—he was borne on his way to the tomb."

Franklin Simmons executed statues of Generals Grant and Sherman and Admiral Farragut, to mention only a few of the Civil War heroes who were his subjects for marble and bronze representations. His statues of Roger Williams stand in Roger Williams Park in Providence, and Statuary Hall in Washington. His art pieces are famous throughout the world and include a bust of Adlai E. Stevenson, a Vice President and grandfather of this decade's Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party in two campaigns.

The Simmons statue of General John A. Logan, created in Italy, was the first one seen in America and Italy that was fashioned entirely of bronze—that is, both statue and pedestal. In recognition of the sculptor's artistry, King Humbert of Italy knighted Simmons in 1898.

The most recent public display of the handsome bust of Lincoln was its appearance, under Pinkerton guard, in the lobby of the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco during the 1956 Republican convention.

That the Lincoln bust is an art treasure with great appeal to art collectors and historians has been fully demonstrated by the interest that marked its discovery in 1952. At this time the owner of it wishes to announce that he is making the unique Franklin Simmons bust of Abraham Lincoln available for acquisition by a private collector or an institution. Inquiries should be addressed to:

Mr. Chester Orsini  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut

SIMMONS, FRANKLIN

DRAWER 22

SCULPTORS-S  
(BUSTS)

